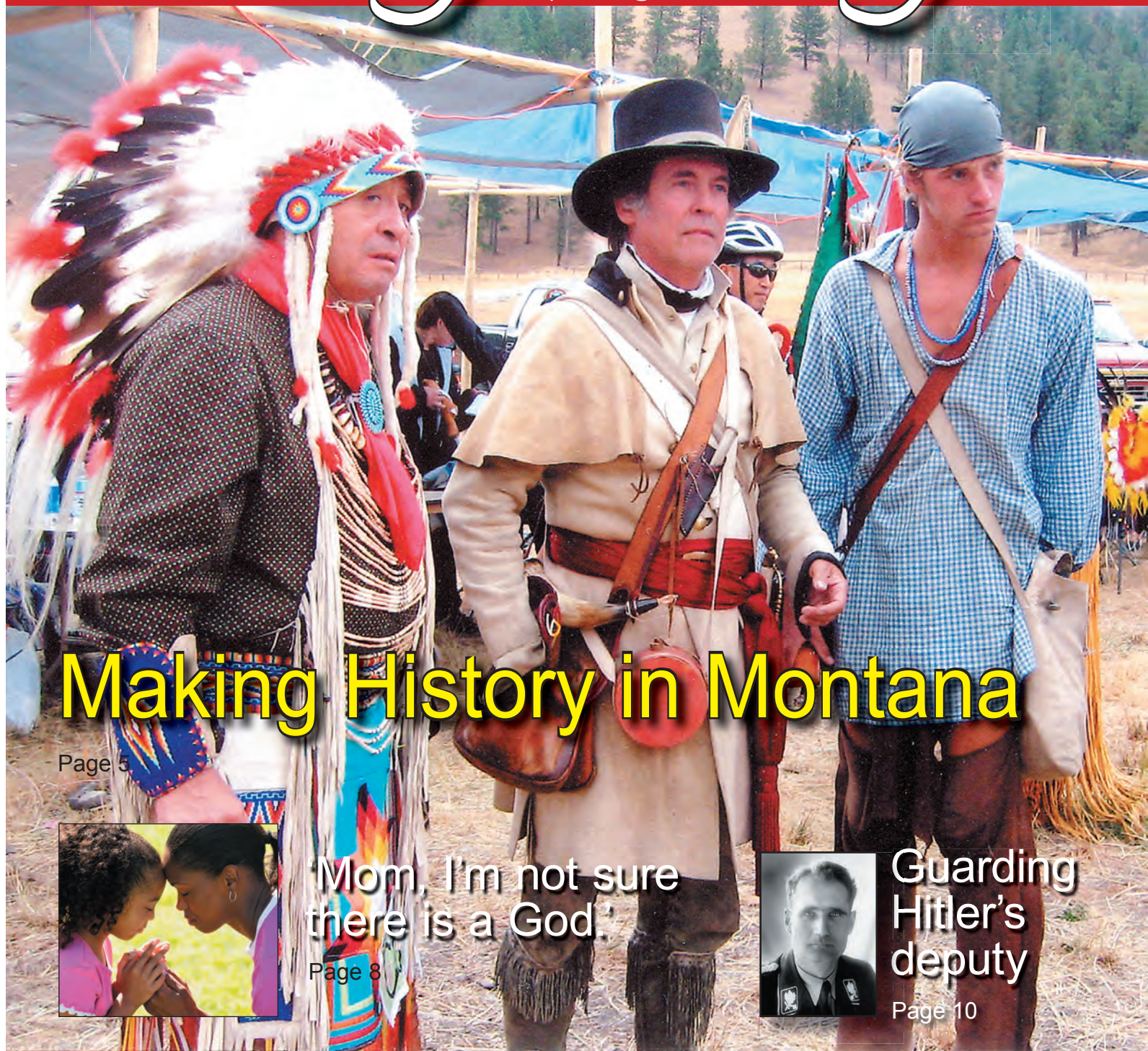


Christian Odyssey

Exploring Life and Faith



Making History in Montana

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there is a God.'

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Letters ~~to~~ (from) the Editor

Why write to Odyssey?

Editors know that one of the most popular pages in any magazine is “Letters to the Editor.”

I suppose readers enjoy it because they like to see what others are thinking. Editors value it because a letter (or e-mail) represents an opinion—feedback—evidence that someone out there is reading the magazine and has something to say about it.

Maybe they agree. Perhaps they disagree. Or they have a suggestion that would improve the magazine. Or they just have something to say and want to say it.

So, although space is tight, we



intend to make space for some “Letters to the Editor” in each issue. Actually, this issue was quite easy—we didn’t get any.

Well, that’s not quite true. We got some changes of address and other routine things. But nothing that could make an interesting “Letters” page.

So how about it? Keep it short and to the point, and I promise we’ll read it. Make it interesting and we may publish it. Abraham

Lincoln once said, “It is the man who does not want to express an opinion whose opinion I want.” We do too.

Over to you.

We like to hear from you

When writing to *Christian Odyssey*, please include a phone number and e-mail address where we can reach you if we have a question.

You can write to *Christian Odyssey* at Box 111, Pasadena, California, 91123, telephone 1-626-304-6199, extension 5772, or you can e-mail the editor directly at john.halford@wcg.org.

For changes of address please call 1-800-423-4444.

I’ve been reading...

The Case for Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus, by Lee Strobel (Zondervan, 1998).

The Case for Christ is much as its title reads, though not perhaps as one might expect.

Rather than being an academic criticism of the evidence for Christ and the actions surrounding him, the author catalogues his own journey as he attempts to examine the truth behind his wife’s claims that Jesus is her personal Savior.

He does not begin his journey as a Christian, and remains rooted in his profession as a journalist. He decides to embark on a critical analysis by interviewing many of the scholars regarded as authoritative voices

on a number of controversial issues surrounding Jesus, his life and his claims.

It is a journey of discovery for the author just as much as a critical exercise. The style is informal, using the first person, as Strobel listens to and records the testimonies and findings of scholar after scholar.

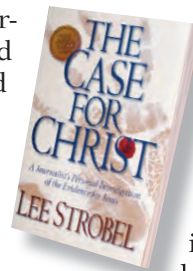
The book is a useful beginner’s guide to Christian responses to many controversies and accusations that have been leveled against the Christian faith and its sources.

It allows us to equip ourselves with the basic knowledge we might need to combat such questions without the exhausting bur-

den of pouring over theological texts. Strobel finishes his book with a challenge to those who are not Christian to examine the evidence and come to their own verdict, just as he found faith in Christ through his journey.

The Case for Christ is an inherently useful handbook on some of the basic points of Christianity and the facts that support it, worth not only the read but a place in your library as a reference book when your friends ask those irritating questions.

I would recommend it as a possible gift for believers and non-believers who want to examine the evidence. *Fraser Henderson.*



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About our cover

During 2006, our country will continue to celebrate the bicentennial of the epic journey of exploration by Lewis and Clark. The two explorers, accompanied by a handpicked Corps of Discovery, explored the hitherto unknown Northwest.

In September 1805, Lewis and Clark met with the Salish Indians near what is now Ross's Hole, Montana. What was intended to reenact history became a history-making event in its own right. Mike Wallace, president of the area chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, tells what happened. (See page 5)

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Let's hope she floats

By John Halford

We've done all we can do. It's time for the launch. The bands are playing. The flags are waving. A few workers are making last-minute adjustments, or giving a quick touch up of paint.

All eyes are on the platform, where the dignitaries are waiting the arrival of the celebrity who will actually swing the bottle of champagne and name the ship. Who will it be?

A famous movie star or pop idol? A politician? Perhaps a member of a royal family?

Everyone is excited, waiting for the big moment. Well, nearly everyone. If you look closely you'll see some people looking a bit anxious. They are the engineers, designers and workers who have actually built the ship.

They have been involved in every aspect—from laying the keel to the last detail of construction. And as we approach the moment of launch, their excitement is tinged with one nagging thought—"I really hope she floats."

The editorial team

As we wait for the big moment, may I take a few moments to introduce the people who have worked on the redesign, and will be helping prepare the future editions of *Christian Odyssey*?

Tom Hanson is the managing editor. Tom takes care of the many details that are needed to get a magazine from the idea stage to your hands.



Tom Hanson

Once the material is edited, Tom prepares it for publication and liaises with the printer and the folks who manage our subscription files.

Tom is also the editor of *WCG Today*, our sister publication, which has news and articles from our denomination around the world.

In fact, none of the people mentioned here work full time on this magazine. We all have other jobs in various aspects of the church's administration.

We have two senior editors. Mike Morrison edits *CO* and manages our website. He also prepares the



Bible studies that have been and will continue to be a popular feature of *CO*. Paul Kroll edits and proofreads the magazine and writes Church History Corner, one of our regular features.

Mike Feazell is media director for the publisher of this magazine, Worldwide Church of God. When Mike asked me to edit the retooled *CO*, he said: "John, this magazine is about grace, pure and simple. People need to know that God loves them and will make their lives worthwhile despite everything they've heard to the contrary. *Christian Odyssey* is not about religion; it's about good news." Mike writes the regular One Pilgrim's Progress.

Finally—myself. I was both delighted and humbled to be asked to take the reigns of the new *Christian Odyssey*. I live in rural Indiana and communicate with the rest of civilization through the wonders of the Internet. I also travel widely as I am editor or consulting editor to several other magazines in Europe, Asia and Australia. Along with my editorial colleagues, I am looking forward to seeing where the new *Christian Odyssey* will take us.



Mike Feazell



Mike Morrison



Paul Kroll

Guest celebrity

So here we are on the platform, waiting for the celebrity to arrive and perform the launching ceremony. Who will it be?

Well, the guest celebrity is none other than you!

You see, *Christian Odyssey* isn't really relaunched until you open it up and begin to read. That's when we find out if it "holds water" and if indeed it serves its purpose. We've done our homework, and we think you will like it, but you are the best judge of that. What do you think? We hope you will let us know (drop me a line or send an e-mail to john.halford@wcg.org).

So now it's over to you. Swing that bottle and let's get her started down the slipway into the water. May God bless her and all who sail with her.

(I really hope she floats).

CO

Making History in Montana

By Mike Wallace

It was exactly 200 years ago last September when the Lewis and Clark expedition came through our neck of the woods here in Montana.

As president of the area chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation (LCTHF), I was among those responsible for organizing the local bicentennial commemorative events. We planned a reenactment and a celebration. What happened was more than that—much more.

First, some background. Between 2004 and 2006, our nation is commemorating the unforgettable journey made by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and their Corps of Discovery that explored the hitherto unknown northwest of our country.

Through a series of special events, many Americans are retracing this epic adventure. In September 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition camped for several days in what is now Travelers Rest State Park, in western Montana.

After 10 years of extensive archaeological research, our chapter discovered the only scientifically verifiable campsite along the 8,000-mile trail. So, as the bicentennial date approached, we planned appropriate commemorative activities in Travelers Rest State Park at the very campsite used by the original expedition.

We were joined by members of the Discovery Expedition of St. Charles, led by Bud Clark, great-great-grandson of Captain



From left: Scotty Gardipee, descendent of one of the chiefs who met Lewis and Clark, Peyton “Bud” Clark (descendant of William Clark), Josh Loftis (descendant of Pvt. George Shannon) and Mike Wallace.

William Clark. They set up camp beside us in the park, and we quickly melded into one large Lewis and Clark living history reenactment brigade.

The festivities began on the morning of Thursday, Sept. 8. Hundreds of school-age children arrived by bus. Our job was to show visitors how Lewis and Clark’s corps survived on the trail. The day was hot and we were tired, but things went well.

Next day, Friday, Sept. 9, was the big day. Exactly 200 years earlier Lewis and Clark were right here in our park. A formal, awe-inspiring salute was led by “Captain Clark” and “Captain Lewis” of the Discovery Expedition from St. Charles. For one full minute we stood at

attention in silence, lost in our own private thoughts on the spot where Lewis and Clark had stood 200 years before.

The Salish Powwow

That evening, several of us proceeded down the Bitterroot Valley to participate in another event at the Salish Powwow grounds three miles south of Sula, Montana. Two hundred years and six days previously, Lewis and Clark had struggled out of the Lost Trail Pass area only to run into the Salish peoples near what is now called Ross’s Hole, Montana.

Like Lewis and Clark, we camped near the Indians and not with them. We were asked by the

See Making history, page 6

Making history

Continued from page 5

Salish to camp about 300 yards up the hill from the circle of the powwow. It was cold and chilly. Dark clouds with spatters of rain greeted us as we set up our tents.

About 7 p.m. we went down to the powwow and were welcomed by the Salish people. Rain fell steadily as we danced with them until late into the night accompanied by their songs and the beating of their drums.

We finally retired to our camp for some much-needed rest, but down the hill the dancing and drums continued. Drum, drum, drum ... drum, drum, drum. It was extremely cold, and the rain frequently alternated with sleet. By morning our tents were drenched.

At 1 p.m., the Salish powwow began again, and the elders invited us to participate with the entire tribe in a special ceremony—the sacred Snake Dance. We felt humbled to be included in such an event so meaningful for the Salish. We were being welcomed with the kindness and friendship the Salish have traditionally had for all people. Sadly, that kindness and friendship has not always been returned.

Johnnie Arlee, one of the Salish tribal elders, began to recite the story of the original meeting of Lewis and Clark with his ancestors near this spot. He explained how the lives of all Salish began to change the day the white man descended from the mountains and bartered for horses.

As he spoke, we, the modern representatives of the Corps of Discovery, came into the center of the circle of drums. Three chiefs met



Smoking the peace pipe

us. As Johnnie Arlee continued to narrate the story from the Salish perspective, the ceremony began.

The chiefs greeted us in friendship, and we returned their greeting. Then the bartering for horses began. The kinickinick (a smoking mixture made from bark) was ceremoniously removed from its pouch and lit.

Scotty Gardipee, a Salish elder, waved the smoke over us. We all sat on buffalo and elk robes as the elders lit their ceremonial pipe and we shared the pipe of peace and friendship.

At first, it was just another reenactment. But somewhere during this ceremony it ceased to be acting and became new Montana history.

Two hundred years and six days after Lewis and Clark had smoked the pipe of peace, we repeated this act. Two descendants of the original Corps of Discovery and several Salish descendants of

the original Indians of 200 years ago, together again, at peace in friendship.

God asks us to be peacemakers, to seek to make peace with our neighbors (compare Matt. 5:9). We can preach the true gospel of Jesus by our positive actions to build bridges of kindness and friendship.

I was lost in the moment. What started as a reenactment became a moment of real reconciliation. When it came time to leave our Salish friends it was hard to go.

Next day was the last day of our part in last year's bicentennial activities. Sept. 11 now has a special meaning for all Americans. But in 1805 it was just another day of the year, as Lewis, Clark and the entire Corps of Discovery headed up the mountain to the west.

May the next 200 years be more peaceful than the last. In 2205, may my great-great-great-grandchildren be part of something so rare and special. CO

The chink in death's armor

By Mike Feazell

Get a load of this lead sentence from Reuters.

*Fri Dec 2, 11:22 AM ET
NEW YORK (Reuters Health)—Women who go through menopause in their early 40s may have a slightly higher risk of death later in life compared with their peers, a large U.S. study suggests.*

Imagine it, a slightly higher risk of death later in life. Apparently, some women have a slightly lower risk of death later in life. Death must not be as inevitable as we all thought. Hmmm. Who pays for these studies, anyway?

Actually, of course, the study itself made sense—it showed that women who go through menopause in their early 40s may not live quite as long after the age of 75 as women who go through menopause later than their early 40s.

The presentation was misleading—not the study. Sometimes it's like that with the gospel, too.

Presented poorly, even the gospel can be misunderstood. And sad to say, there's a lot of that going around these days.

The gospel is actually good news. It exposes the chink that Jesus put in death's armor. It promises a new life beyond death, a life rich in joy, peace, friendship and love. A



life in harmony with a God who loves you and wants you with him no matter who you are, where you've been or what you've done.

But it's not always presented that way. Sometimes it's presented as a

way to get big cars, big houses and fancy clothes right now. Just "name it and claim it," people are told.

Sometimes it's presented as an austere framework of rules and regulations overseen by an angry God who'll roast you forever if you don't toe the line.

Sometimes it's presented as a glorious pyramid scheme in which the more pious salespeople you fast-talk into joining, the greater your eternal income will be.

Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

But some believers let their pushy, memorized spiels so grate before people that given a choice, I suspect that most people would rather live next door to a used car salesman than to a Bible-thumping evangelical Christian.

If we could all do it the way Jesus said to, if we could all let our light shine in such a way that people are won over instead of put

off, imagine what a positive reputation the good news could have.

If only we could present the gospel the way it really is, as a new life in Christ, a life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (see Galatians 5:22-23) instead of as some wacky caricature that misrepresents both the gospel and Jesus.

I wonder if there might be some merit in placing our emphasis on being the kind of people that Jesus said his disciples would be rather than just telling people what to believe. Wouldn't that win more people over

to the real power of the gospel?

The chink in death's armor is love, after all, not memorized testimonies. Testimonies have their place, but it's love, God's love, that overthrows death and hell. And people can digest genuine, godly love a whole lot easier than fast talk, pushy questions and judgmental frowns. The proof is in the pudding, not in reciting the recipe.

Large U.S. studies show that we all have a slightly higher risk of death today than we did yesterday. But because God loves us, because his Son died for us and now lives for us, death has had its teeth pulled. Like the old gray mare, death ain't what it used to be. And that good news is worth living for. Why not show someone today? *CO*

If only we could present the gospel the way it really is, as a new life in Jesus Christ.

Presented poorly, even the gospel can be misunderstood.

Mom, I'm not sure there is a God!

By Rose Huff

My 17-year-old daughter has continually surprised me from the moment she was two minutes old—when the attending medical team commented on her unusual mental sharpness.

I say this not just for bragging rights, but to provide a backdrop for what she has always done—pondered mature philosophical ideas. I should have expected it, then, when I suggested she pray about her prospective college scholarship awards, and she said to me: “You know Mom, I’m not sure there is a God.”

As a clinical therapist, I’ve been trained to develop a therapeutic visual facade—known as game face in sports circles. Upon hearing her declaration of considering atheism, I went instinctively into a calm, emotion-free, therapy face. But on the other side of my game face was panic face—aaaagggghhhh! How could my daughter question God’s existence? OK, breathe ... breathe ... relax! Stay calm ... breathe!

After stabilizing my oxygen intake, I managed to morph back into normal mode, the calm and understanding Mom who has so often helped her child walk through life’s difficult issues.

“So dear, how did you come to that thought?” Alexis proceeded to paint a picture of inconsistencies between what she had been



taught and believed God was supposed to be like, and that he actually did not seem to be measuring up historically, globally and personally. As usual she cogently blended aged logic with 17-year-old experience.

Being the dutiful, though slightly panicky Mom, I thought it best to ask her general questions about her previously held proofs of God’s existence as well as provide her with what I believed to be some helpful direction.

I proposed to her that faith is always a personal experience, and one human cannot establish belief for another. I told her she would have to discover her own experience of God, and that if she was willing to prove he does exist, then he would surely provide her a unique assurance of his existence.

She quickly reminded me that my reasoning was flawed because any scientist worth her research knows that you cannot prove that something exists; you prove what does not exist based on the absence of certain traits in your subject matter. What?

Knowing my child’s personality, I have learned it is best to challenge her thinking, or debate with her, only if she initiates the dialogue. Since she was not asking me for proof or assurance, I told her that I appreciated the fact she was willing to share such a huge personal struggle with me. I assured her that if she decided to discuss more about spiritual paths I would gladly do that with her.

That conversation stayed with

me for the next several days, and I added her need for clarity to my prayer list. I realized first of all that praying about it would be the most powerful action I could take.

Next, I realized that the things I said to her—even in game face—were wholly correct.

She needed to know that she could ponder the most monumental concept of humanity and that she could rely on me to support her.

I don’t have to agree with her or like it, but she would not benefit from the pressure of an upset parent.

She, like most of us, needs the freedom to not believe in order to make the journey toward believing. It’s the age-old parenting technique used with your toddler who has learned to say no.

You provide options instead of choosing for them: We learn to ask the small child who refuses to wear a shirt, “Do you want to wear the green shirt or the blue shirt?” This has always worked well between Alexis and me.

The other part of my realization was that, once again, my own faith is being challenged. I need to trust that God holds my daughter as lovingly in his hands as I have always experienced him in directing my own life’s journey. After all, he blessed me by allowing me to give birth to her and rear her, but ultimately she belongs to him.

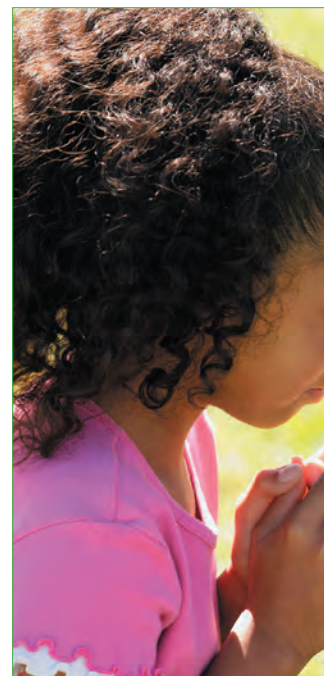




Photo by Design Pics

It is his desire that none should be lost, but each person's journey is a unique path toward him.

As a parent I always wanted two things that were actually mutually exclusive: 1) the BEST for my children; and 2) to shield them from any pain or hurt. Unfortunately, if a person ever made it from birth to age 18 with factor number two ruling the day, he or she would not be equipped to manage mature, productive adult life.

So while on one hand I would love for Alexis to have already arrived at that amazing place of believing with certainty that God exists, I know that merely accepting that without the process of struggling through her doubts would rob her of the rich experience and lessons that will some day make him a reality to her.

On the other hand, I also know God's love for Alexis, and I can rest in faith that at the right time he will make himself irrefutably known to her. CO

Bystander

The Bride's Story

I had been dreaming of this day since I was a little girl because my groom and I had been promised to each other since childhood. Our year of engagement had been full of anticipation and careful preparation for our wedding feast.

I fasted all day as required, so I felt a little light-headed. I tried hard to concentrate while reciting the prayers of atonement as part of my preparation. Though I had shed some nervous tears earlier, I had to smile when the groom's messengers arrived and I watched them lay out the garments and ornaments and perfume I was to wear. My dear groom had been so extravagant I could hardly believe my eyes.

As evening drew closer, I stood proudly as my friends clothed me in my exquisite bridal gown and ornaments. I let down my hair as is expected of a bride and carefully placed the crown of fresh myrtle leaves on my head. Over it all was placed the long white veil of betrothal. And then I waited until dusk turned to darkness.

With much joy and shouting, my groom and his friends "searched" the village for me. Finally I saw the torches as they entered my parent's courtyard. "Come see the treasure I have found," my groom said as he lifted my veil and our eyes met. We walked out onto the street into a procession filled with music and dancing. My groom led me proudly to his house and into the room reserved for the women. Surrounded by my maidens, I sat on the special platform prepared for me. I was not accustomed to being the center of attention and it was exhilarating.

I could see into the room where the feast was spread for the men. Everything was just perfect! My father-in-law was bursting with satisfaction and was being more than generous with the wine. So much time and expense had gone into the preparations, and the wine was extremely important.

After a few hours, I noticed confusion among some of the servers. I was stunned to learn they had run out of wine! This was the ultimate embarrassment and disgrace to the family. I couldn't hold back the tears as they fell on my lovely wedding dress. Then I saw Mary of Nazareth leave our women's table. She spoke to my father-in-law and then approached her son, Jesus the carpenter. I heard Jesus tell the servers to fill up the six big water jugs in the hallway, right to the brim. Then he told them to dip some out of a jug and give it to the master of the feast, who, when he tasted it, immediately asked my groom why he had saved the best wine till last.

My groom and his father were speechless. Their reputations were saved, and the biggest day of my life didn't end in disgrace. Mary told me later Jesus was at first reluctant to do this because it was not time for his power to be shown publicly. Jesus went on to do the most amazing things and was finally crucified, then raised from the dead! So we will never forget how he chose our wedding feast to begin his great work and, at the same time, touch our lives in such a beautiful way. *Joyce Catherwood*

Guarding Hitler's deputy

By Bill Horton

Back in the '60s, when I was in the army, I was stationed in Berlin for two years.

This was at the height of the Cold War. Berlin was divided and the wall was up, but as part of the occupying army, we had right of access to the Eastern sector. My platoon commander, a driver and I would go on official reconnaissance trips into Communist-ruled East Berlin.

For a 19-year-old this was heady stuff. All the duties were done in "best bulled" kit and best number two dress. This means shiny boots, gleaming belt buckles, big hats and razor sharp creases in everything—even underwear. We had to maintain severe looks on our faces.

At that time the Berlin garrison was around 15,000 or 20,000 English, French and American troops, surrounded by 250,000 Russian and 150,000 East German soldiers. But the Russians had no hold on the Western Sector except for guard duty at the Russian war memorial and their turn at guarding high-ranking Nazis serving long sentences in the old Spandau prison.

We British, with our American and French allies, also took a turn at this guard duty—each nation doing three months in rotation. The prisoners included Hitler's architect Albert Speer, Baldur von Schirach, leader of the Hitler Youth, and Rudolph Hess, Hitler's deputy, who had flown to Britain in 1941 on a self-appointed "peace mission."

The only one of the three I ever

saw was Hess. The first time was when I was assigned to guard him while he was temporarily transferred to the British Military Hospital for treatment.

The platoon sergeant gave us our orders. "If anyone tries to get to, or do harm to Rudolph Hess at any time during our guardian duty of him they are to be incapacitated, stopped, put out of action, in or by any means at your disposal. If you have to shoot them you must shoot to kill."

Protecting Hitler's deputy

So here I was, an impressionable young man, under orders to protect, with my own life if necessary, Adolph Hitler's right-hand



Rudolph Hess

man. Hess had an upstairs wing of the hospital to himself. To get to him anyone would be in the sights of the man at the top of the stairs—me!

I didn't expect anyone to be stupid enough to take me on, but one medic didn't quite understand. I shouted down the stairs "stand still," but it wasn't until I cocked my weapon that he knew I meant business.

At that moment Rudolph Hess walked across the corridor to the examination room, chained between two Royal Military Policemen.

For a moment I disobeyed orders and looked into the eyes of Rudolph Hess. We stared at each other for a few seconds. His look said it all: "You guard my life with yours, young man," and then he was gone into the examination room. Only then we had to let the poor medic up, because he was carrying Hess's medicine.

Spandau

We also guarded Hess in the old prison in Spandau, taking our turns along with the Americans, Russians and French. The prisoners were not held in the main building of the prison, which was falling down. They had a purpose-built bungalow inside the grounds.

Spandau was a solitary place. Even with the bustling city all around, it was quiet. It had a large gate house and eight guard towers, with searchlights and, once again, we had live ammunition loaded in our weapons. It sounds like over-

kill—all this just to watch a few old men. But, even 20 years after the war had ended, these were high profile prisoners.

Feeling sorry for prisoners

Sometimes I felt sorry for them. When we or the Americans and French did guard duty they were allowed some home comforts. But we were not allowed to speak to them, or even make eye contact, unless it was strictly necessary.

Hess used to take great pleasure in getting us in trouble if he could. He would ask for chocolate and cigarettes, both of which he was allowed if he could get them. If one of us was stupid enough to give them to him he would then immediately report us, and we would end up in the guard house.

When the Russians took over guard duty, everything the prisoners had would be confiscated. And I mean everything. All that was left to them was a bed, a mattress and a blanket. No radio or books, not even a Bible.

During the time I was in Berlin, not once did I see or hear of the prisoners having any visitors—not family, not even a minister or priest. Letters from home were always a comfort to me, but they had none.

Eventually, as the other prisoners either died or were released, Hess and his guards were Spandau's only inhabitants. It was a quiet, lonely place and always cold, dark and dour. The routine was only briefly relieved by flag waving, sword saluting and rifle presenting when we handed over to the Russians. Then it was back to severe looks, razor sharp creases and shiny boots—just to guard a lonely and bitter old man.

Now, thinking back 40 years,

it was an experience I would not have missed for the world. Or would I? I was taken out of what remained of my childhood and youth and thrown into the adult world a little faster than I would have liked. Tanks, guns and all things military were my life for the next 20 years. As I grew older I grew wiser, and in my late 30s the hand of God reached out and I became a Christian. I left the army in 1986.

Could it have been different?

Rudolph Hess remained in Spandau until he died at the age of 92, in 1987. I often wonder how things would have been different if Rudolph Hess had reached out to his one and only true Savior.

God called me and I answered. I don't think poor Rudolph Hess ever heard the call. Apparently he was an unrepentant Nazi to the end, professing loyalty to his failed Fuehrer and the awful regime he had served. He was once described as the loneliest man in the world.

At the time I would not have been allowed to contact him even if I had wanted to. And anyway, at that time I did not know God as I know him now—a God of mercy who is willing to forgive all sins and accept all repentant sinners.

I suppose Rudolph Hess died without knowing that. I am no theologian, and I don't know exactly where that leaves him. But I do know where it leaves us. No matter who we are and what we are, we can always call out to the God whose love is broad and deep enough for everyone who looks to him for help. Yes, even the loneliest man in the world.

Bill Horton now lives in Birmingham, England. CO

In other words...

The Prince who smells good

By James R. Henderson

Different cultures use a great variety of words and expressions for "God." In Madagascar, an island country off the southeast coast of Africa, they call God *Andriamantitra*. This means "the prince who smells good."

The implication of *Andriamantitra* is that Jesus lives!

All the ancestors, to whom Madagascans would pray, are dead, and they would smell bad as their bodies rotted in the grave, just as Lazarus did despite the use of fragrant oils in the embalming process.

However, Jesus, the greatest ancestor, whose sacrifice was as a "sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:2, NKJ), has risen from the dead, and he is alive, filling the believer with the breath of eternal life.

This idea has a direct application for us in our Christian walk. The apostle Paul reminds us that Christian workers are to God the fragrance of the living resurrected Christ. This fragrance is "perceived differently by those being saved and by those perishing. To those who are perishing we are a fearful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved we are a life-giving perfume" (2 Corinthians 2:16, New Living Translation).

As we do the work of Christ we dispense the refreshing, life-giving perfume of the Prince who smells good! CO

The African-American church in America

By Paul Kroll

“Eleven o’clock Sunday morning is the most segregated hour, and Sunday school is still the most segregated school of the week,” is an oft-quoted statement from Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968). King was referring to the fact that during his lifetime most African-Americans worshiped in congregations and churches mainly or entirely composed of black people.

These African-American churches’ roots go back to the North and South of the Revolutionary War period of the 1760s and 1770s. Like whites, blacks also began to come to Christ during the religious revivalism of the period.

African-Americans shared a common belief with European-American evangelicals that the biblical account of God’s past dealings with the world offered clues to the meaning of life in America. But, there was a difference. White Protestants often likened America to the Promised Land—the New Israel—a “city set on a hill.” Black worshipers were more likely to see America as Egypt—as the land of their captivity. They longed for their own emancipation, just as God had delivered ancient Israel in the Exodus.

This desire for emancipation eventually led to the African-American church movement. Blacks in the Methodist church took the lead in creating independent denominations.

In the Revolutionary period, the impetus for blacks to have their own churches owes much to the work of Richard Allen. He was a former slave and deacon-elder at the integrated St. George’s Methodist Church in Philadelphia.

In 1787, Allen with Absalom Jones organized the Free African Society in Philadelphia. Allen founded the all-black Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1791, after Jones and he left St. George’s over its segregationist practice of relegating black members to the church balcony during worship services.

Over time, growing numbers of African-Americans formed their own congregations. In 1816, representatives of these congregations joined to form the African Meth-



Paul Kroll

odist Episcopal Church (A.M.E. church), with Allen as the first bishop. The most significant growth of this church occurred during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

African-American churches took up what has been their historical mission to care for the spiritual and physical needs of black people, since they were neglected and discriminated against by white society. Yet, they did not forget the ultimate mission of the church—to make disciples in all nations and among all peoples. The A.M.E. church sees its mission in this way: “To minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ’s liberating gospel through word and deed ... that is, to seek out and save the lost, and serve the needy.”

African-American churches have been a bulwark in the black community—a refuge from the larger, cruel world. Richard Wright, in his book *12 Million Black Voices*, wrote: “It is only when we are within the walls of our churches that we are wholly ourselves, that we keep alive a sense of our personalities in relation to the total world in which we live.”

The black church was also a sanctuary for praise and worship of Christ. Here members could express themselves freely and unite culturally in their beliefs and life practices. As worshipful communities, African-American Christians saw their relationship with Jesus as the bedrock of a faith that gave them hope for a better future.

By the late 1950s, a generation of African-Americans began to drift away from the church. The relevance of the church was dealt a serious blow, as many urban youths felt it no longer had anything to offer—that it did not speak to the reality of their lives.

However, the African-American church continues to be for many black people the place of worship and source of strength, though it is much more diverse than it once was.

The Sunday service may still be a time when people of different racial backgrounds to some degree are segregated, as Martin Luther King Jr. observed. However, today even most exclusively black churches have made connections to the larger Christian community and serve black people as well as people of all races in ministry and the gospel of Christ. CO



Blacksmith shop (foreground) that may depict site of Richard Allen’s original church building in Philadelphia.

This space is reserved ... for someone who has never been published

By (Perhaps your name could be here.)

?
Your photo
here
?

Well, why not? Many of us have good intentions when it comes to writing, but we seize almost any excuse to put it off.

Here are some:

“I’m not a good enough writer.”

No excuse. You don’t have to be. Writing is just another way of communicating, and you do that all the time—on the telephone, by e-mail, and in everyday conversation.

Writing for publication isn’t really different, unless you convince yourself that it is.

“I don’t know grammar, and I can’t spell.”

No excuse. That just means job security for people like us. We’ll correct your spelling and grammatical mistakes, fix the punctuation and perhaps do a bit of rearranging if it helps you say what you want to say. We’ll make you look good, and we won’t begrudge the time spent getting your work ready to be seen in public.

What we can’t do is have your idea.

“But no one would be interested in my silly little idea.”

No excuse. Most of our lives are spent dealing with trivial details. It is in the predictable, humdrum of ordinary life that we need help,

hope and encouragement. The articles people remember most are the ones that help them with some small aspect of their Christian experience. Never underestimate the lessons you learn in the routine steps of your walk with God.

“I’m afraid of rejection.”

No excuse. So is everybody. Writing is a personal, creative activity. Like a painting, or a cake, or homemade clothes. Everybody can see what you have done. Most of us struggle with feelings of inferiority, and we like to protect ourselves from humiliation and embarrassment. A writer has to get past that.

“I don’t have time.”

Well ... yes, OK. That’s probably right. So you’ll have to make time. There is a vast gap between intending to write and having written, and there is only one way to cross it. Decide a time when you are going to sit down and write, and then do it.

So, come on. No more excuses. Get a pen and paper, or sit down at that computer, set yourself a target number of words (we suggest at least 300 or 400) and start writing.

Don’t wait for that moment of inspiration. It is waiting for you. Don’t look for that irresistible opening. That will come later. Just write. It may be disorganized nonsense at first. But after a few sentences things will settle down and ideas will begin to flow. Most writers find that the best ideas

don’t come until they are actually writing.

Resist the temptation to quit when you can’t figure out what to say. The dreaded writer’s block is like driving in deep snow or mud—keep moving. So keep writing until you get back on solid ground.

Before you know it you will have a first draft. Then relax. You’ve done the hard part. The rest is fun.

The fun part

Read over what you have written. You will be surprised at how good the first draft is. Clean up the obvious problems, run a spell and grammar check program if you have one, and then put it all away for a while.

After a few hours, or the next day, read through your article again. If possible, read it out loud to yourself. You will notice where a phrase sounds awkward or a sentence is too long. Reading aloud makes your written material sound like you.

Then, give it a final polish and send it to us. We can’t promise to use it, but we will promise to read it. We are setting aside some space in each issue for the contribution of a first-time writer just like you.

So if not you, who?

If not now, when?

Articles for Jump Start should be about 450 to 500 words. We really like it when you send them as a Word document attached to an e-mail. Send to john.halford@wgc.org.
CO

A Mountain of Joy

A study of Hebrews 12:18 to 13:6

By Michael Morrison

After exhorting readers to continue in the Christian faith, Hebrews gives further encouragement by painting a picture of the choice set before them. On one side is fear and death, but the readers have chosen a life of joy with Christ.

The mountain of fear

“You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: ‘If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.’ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, ‘I am trembling with fear.’” (Heb. 12:18-21, referring to Ex. 19:13).

The mountain does not need to be named, for the readers know it well: Mount Sinai, where the old covenant was made with Israel. The mountain stands for the old covenant—a covenant they once participated in, but a covenant they have left behind in order to embrace a life with Christ.

If we read between the lines, we see that the readers were being pressured by neighbors to return to the old covenant. The author, by describing the results



of the choice they have made, is encouraging them to remain faithful to Jesus. Don't look back, he says. That is a covenant of gloom and doom. It has condemnation, not salvation.

Moses did not fear for his own life—he said, **“I feared the anger and wrath of the Lord, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you”** (Deut. 9:19). Moses knew that the people had rebelled against God and deserved to die. He asked God to spare them, and God did, but his fear shows the serious penalties involved in breaking the Sinai covenant.

A joyful assembly

In contrast, the new covenant is a place of joy and fellowship with God: **“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel”** (Heb. 12:22-24).

The new covenant is a place with happy people, where angels rejoice. This is the reward of the saved, those who are the firstborn

children of God, who have been welcomed by the Judge of the universe. They were not perfect, but they have been made perfect by the blood of Christ, which promises forgiveness rather than vengeance.

The readers have not come to this place yet, but the author describes it as if they have. When they accepted Jesus as the Messiah, this joyful place became their new destination, and the author wants to make sure that they do not turn aside.

“See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?” (v. 25). The readers probably had Jewish neighbors who said, “If you turn away from the old covenant, you will be punished.” And so the author responds with threats of his own: “It is true that people were punished for turning away from Moses, but now, we will be punished if we turn away from what he is saying in Jesus Christ.”

The unshakable kingdom

The author makes a smooth transition from this warning into a reminder of the reward God has promised: **“At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’ The words ‘once more’ indicate the**

removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain” (vv. 26-27, quoting Haggai 2:6).

At Mount Sinai, God’s voice shook the earth, but he has also promised to shake the earth again, and the author of Hebrews focuses our attention on the word *once*. He will do it only once—never again will the heavens and earth need to be shaken, because the shaking will be so severe that only the permanent will remain.

Haggai 2:7 promises that God “will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord Almighty.”

The eternal kingdom will come, so how should we respond? “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire’ ” (vv. 28-29, quoting Deut. 4:24).

Since God has promised us a great reward, we should be thankful and worship him—and as the letter makes plain, we must come to him through Jesus. But the threat still exists for those who turn away, for God is still a consuming fire to those who refuse him. God will consume everyone who disobeys, so we all need the intercession that Jesus offers in the new covenant.

Concluding exhortations

In chapter 13, the writing style changes abruptly, and the author gives some short reminders: “**Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers,**

for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it” (13:1-2).

The chance of entertaining angels is incredibly small, but the author is reminding the readers to do something that they already know they should.

He gets more serious in verse 3: “**Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.**”

Some members of the congregation were in jail, and the author encourages the readers to continue to visit them. Ancient prisons did not give prisoners any food, so visits from friends were essential, even though the officers might suspect that the visitors had the same illegal beliefs. Why should we risk our safety to visit prisoners? Because we might be in prison tomorrow, and we will need people to visit us.

“**Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral”** (v. 4). The author

does not emphasize this point, and it was probably not a problem for the readers. This ethical exhortation was common advice among Jews.

“**Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you’** ” (v. 5, quoting Deut. 31:6).

Although enemies may steal our possessions (see 10:34), we can be content with the greatest treasure of all: a promise of

life eternal with God.

“**So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can human beings do to me?’** ” (Heb. 13:6, quoting Psalm 118:6-7). What can people do to us when we have faith in Christ?

As the author has already noted, they can ridicule us, take our possessions, put us in jail, even kill us. But they can never take away the reward that God will give us. We can be confident because he gives us an eternal perspective on the things of this world.

Since God has promised us a great reward, we should be thankful and worship him ... through Jesus Christ.

Questions for discussion

- Why does the author characterize Mount Sinai so negatively? (12:18-21)
- Do I feel like I have come to a joyful assembly in heaven? (12:23)
- Do I worship God with thanksgiving, or with fear? (12:28-29)
- Am I commanded to visit prisoners today? (13:3)
- Am I completely unafraid of what people can do to me? (13:6)

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Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.



John Wesley

IF WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO LAUGH IN HEAVEN I DON'T WANT TO GO THERE.

MARTIN LUTHER

Our job is to live as well and as long as we can, and to help others do the same.

What happens after that, and how we are viewed by others is beyond our control. The river of time carries us all away. All we have is the moment.

Bill Clinton

If you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have reasoned out of it by honest argument. Do not most people simply drift away?

C.S. Lewis

Anyone who thinks there is a difference between education and entertainment doesn't know the first thing about either.

Marshall McLuhan

Letters to God from children

Dear God,

Please put another holiday between Christmas and Easter. There is nothing good in there now.

Amanda

God,
I read the Bible. What does beget mean? Nobody will tell me.

Love, Alison

Dear God,
Maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other so much if they each had their own rooms. It works out OK with me and my brother.

Larry

Dear God,
Thank you for the baby broth-

er, but what I asked for was a puppy.

I never asked for anything before. You can look it up.

Joyce

Dear God,
Did you mean for giraffes to look like that or was it an accident?


Norma

Dear God,
Is it true my father won't get in heaven if he uses his golf words in the house?

Anita

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